aST

NEW EDITION

Vancouver Island ST Association

February 1988 Volume 2 Number 2

INSIDE

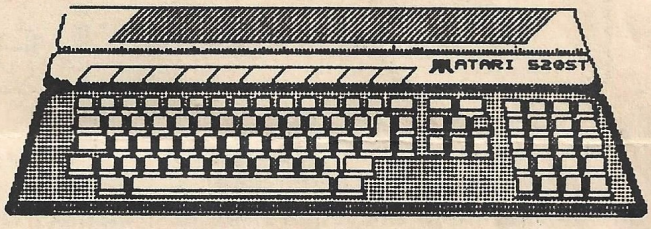
President's Message and More Memory ..... page 2

Drafix ..... page 3

Games & Advertising ..... page 4

Hints & News Shorts ..... page 5

Sylvia's Corner ..... page 6



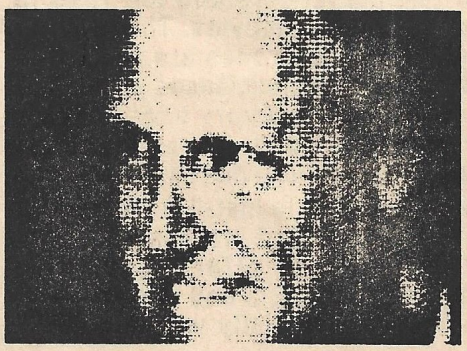
This edition of the newsletter was printed on Atari's new SLM804 Laser printer. A & B Sound has it available to be used by all ST owners. If you want professional looking documents, you can print them on the Laser printer if you have one of the following programs: 1st_Word, WordPerfect or Publishing Partner. All you need is to bring a DATA disk with your completed file to A & B Sound. They charge $1.00 per copy for this sevice, which is $0.50 less than other companies in town charge. You can also buy a punch card for $20.00, which allows you to print 25 copies. If you plan to use the Laser printer with Publishing Partner you must remember to reduce the print-out to 96% until SoftLogic comes out with a new driver.

You will likely find a lot more graphics in the comming issues. The reason for that is that I have been able to successfully transfer clipart from other computer formats to the ST, using a conversion program called PICSW.prg. This program allows you to convert Amiga or MacPaint pictures to be used with either Degas or Neochrome. If you have a friend who has either an Amiga, Mac or Magic Sac and if you both have modems, just transfer the pictures you want and give them the proper extensions: xxx.MAC or xxx.IFF for Amiga pictures. Even if you don't have a modem, you can still do it by connecting the two computers directly using a nul-modem cable.

The PICSW program is in the public domain and is available from Bob Furber. On the same disk is a fairly decent paint program and a programmable TI59 calculator.

EDITORIAL

John Russow



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Last month, elections were held for positions on the executive. The position of Secretary was not filled. Those elected are:

Robert Fraser - President,
Kevin Ford - Vice President,
John Russow - Treasurer,
Bob Furber - Librarian.

The themes for the next seven meetings this year are as follows:

January	DRAWING PROGRAMS
February	PAINT PROGRAMS
March	SPREADSHEETS
April	MUSIC/MIDI
May	DATABASES
June	DESKTOP PUBLISHING
July	COMMUNICATIONS

I have become increasingly aware of the copying of commercial software by ST owners. We must strive to stop this practice. Software writers will stop writing software for the ST if they are not paid for their labors. The Feds are giving software more copywrite protection. If you violate the copywrite laws I hope you have $100,000 and six years of freetime.

We should each look in our software collections for software we shouldn't have. One candidate is 1st_Word Plus. This program is not public domain software. Also, the programs that come with magazines such as START are also not public domain software. You must purchase the magazine to use the software. Lets keep the ST a good market for new software.

Robert Fraser

Thanks for the Memory

With the introduction of the Mega ST series of computers we can expect to see software that will require two to four megabytes of memory to run. Many of these programs have to do with desktop publishing and computer aided drawing. Owners of 520 and 1040 STs have two options if they wish to use these new software packages. The first option is to buy a Mega ST. The second option is to add more memory to their existing STs.

Earlier memory upgrades involved soldering memory chips onto existing ones, or replacing the existing 256K chips with the newer 1040K RAM chips (1040 only). These upgrades would boost the memory of a 520ST to one megabytes and the 1040 to two or four megabytes. These types of memory upgrades are better left for qualified technicians to install.

The newer memory upgrades are the plug-in types. These upgrades require no soldering and are relatively easy to install. They consist of a circuit board that fits under the RF shield and offer a choice of upgrades of 1, 2.5 and 4 megabytes of memory, usually with the same board.

I installed a memory upgrade board in my 520ST to boost the memory to one megabyte. It required a little patience to install, but it worked first time.

It should be noted that these upgrades violate the warranty. Below is a list of three suppliers of memory upgrade boards. I have written to these companies for more information on their boards and I will update the information written here in a future newsletter.

LIST OF SUPPLIERS

DoubleThink Plus by

ThoughtSpace Development
2450 Warring St. No. 21
Berkeley, CA 94704
(415) 845-1415

is a 3 Meg. plug-in upgrade with one year warranty and features RAM disk and other accessories.

330-400ST Solderless Ram by

E. Arthur Brown Company
3404 Pawnee Drive
Alexandria, MN 56308

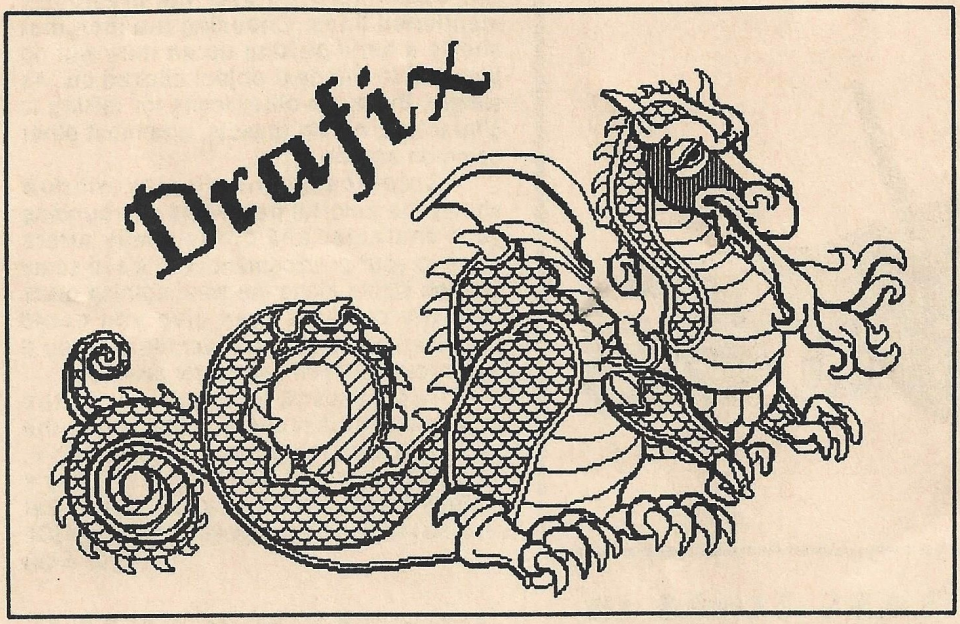
gives you anywhere from 1-4 Meg. of memory. It plugs into the existing MMV socket and onto the data buffer chips. It fits inside the RF shielding and comes with a one year warranty. It is available for $200 US, without memory chips.

1040 KIT by

Tech-Specialists
909 Hodgkins, Suite A
Houston, Texas 77032

Plugs-in and fits under the RF shielding. The kit, less RAM costs $68 US. It comes with a one year Warranty. The Kit is also available with 1 Meg of RAM for $179 US, with 2.5 Meg for $495 US and with 4 Meg for $995 US. A real-time clock is also available with the Kit for $30 US.

Robert Fraser



Drafix is a wonderful and powerful CAD program with features usually only found in more expensive programs. It is a professional type program and requires a plotter to print out hardcopies. You can make a screen dump on your printer allright, but to produce professional looking drawings you have to use a plotter.

Drafix is a port over from IBM, where it is operated using a three buttoned LogiTech mouse. The three buttoned concept has been retained in the ST version, in spite of the fact that the ST mouse only has two buttons. They managed this by leaving the left botton as the left button, while designating the right button as the middle button. The right IBM button is activated by pressing both ST buttons simultaneously. It takes a little while to get used to this. Generally, however the left button is used to accept or engage something, whereas the right button is used to cancel or negate something.

Drafix uses the GEM environment in their own customized fashion. The drawing area is in the middle right of the screen, surrounded on three sides by menus. At the top you will find menus such as FILE, PARAMETERS, DISPLAY, DRAW, ERASE, MODIFY and GROUP. Each one of these headers have two layers of subheaders, which gives you a lot of control (see FIG. 1).

To the left are menus which allows you to choose such things as line type and layer in the upper Item Attribute menu. Under that is the Coordinate Input Mode menu where you can choose the type of coordinate system you want to use, i.e. Relative or Polar. From this menu you can also decide to enter different snap modes.

Also on the left you will find at the bottom the Pointer or mouse prompts. This then means that all you have to do, if you are unsure of which button to press, is to look at this menu.

At the bottom of the screen to the left is a Message and Text input area. In the middle and to the right are the Current x and y coordinate point that the cursor is at. To the right you will find the available memory and the time.

Line items including double lines are stored in the drawing database with the following information:

Pen # (plotter pen coulour)
Layer # (256 layers)
Linetype (8 to choose from)
Start point (x,y)
End Point (x,y)

Arcs and circles are likewise stored with Pen, Layer and Linetype information. In addition the following information is stored:

Center (x,y)
Radius
Starting angle
incremental arc angle

Two kinds of curves are provided in Drafix:

free hand sketching and
automatic smooth curves (splines)

Sketching can be used to trace or enter freehand a path or figure. A sketched curve is made up of a series of short line segments. Spline curves are a more precise way to automatically draw a smooth path between successive points (called knots). All shapes and polylines can be smoothed.

Drafix has 15 crosshatch shade patterns or fills. In addition to the industry standards such as Steel, brick. insulation patterns etc. there are dashed and dotted fill patterns.

With the Modify command you can modify, not only the linetype and the text, but you can also stretch, trim and shape an object.

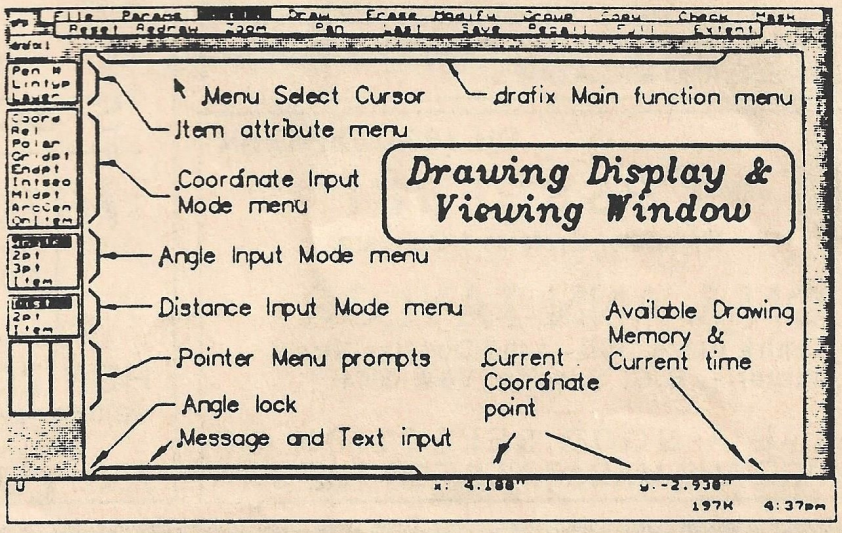
The Group function is used to add or remove items from the active Workgroup within a drawing.

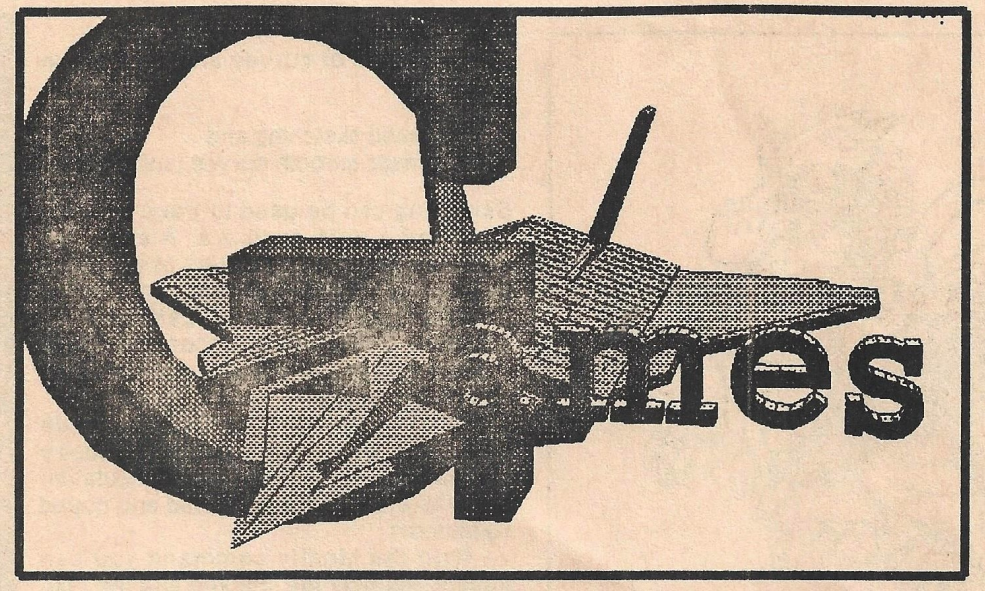
The Erase function allows you to erase any or all items or a Group or a Region from a drawing

The copy and Move functions make copies, transform, and move items in the drawing database. There are several ways to move or copy items with new attributes. You can align, mirror, rotate and scale items.

The most impressive function to me is the automatic Dimension function. Dimension items are automatically generated from the geometry of a drawing, using the dimensioning functions. There are plenty of these functions. You can for example enter dimensions horizontally, vertically, at an angle, parallel or rotated. You can also enter them using the Radius or the diameter.

Drafix is a full featured program. I only wish that it was possible to print out a drawing on a dot matrix printer. Or at least let the program be compatible with other CAD programs. ($210)





has been improved over the previously mentioned titles. Choosing the icon that shows a hand picking up an item will do just that to the next object clicked on. As simply, there are other icons for talking to characters, hitting objects, and most other common actions.

Graphically, the display window shows the colorful panorama surrounding your character and occasionally offers clues to your predicament. You'll see some starnge sights along the way; nothing other than the pictures they give you could prepare you for the pandemonium you'll live through as you search for Gramps.

I don't want to spoil any of the enjoyment of discovery, both within the game and from the props that come with it, so suffice it to say that "Tass" is today's "totally awesome," and you'd better get tass fast to pass through this one! ($40US)

Andy Eddy

WHEEL of FORTUNE

Wheel of Fortune as you would expect is just like the game show on TV. You spin a wheel and if you land on a price slice and if you guess one of the consonants in the puzzle, you get that price money. Vowels you can buy, of course only if you have won some price money. Three players can participate. One full game takes three rounds.

Wheel of Fortune is in the public domain. On the same disk is Monopoly, Yahtzee, PacFish (a variation of PacMan), Target and Panic (the old standard break out).

TASS TIMES in TONETOWN

Created by the same programming group that was responsible for *Mindshadow* and *Borrowed Time, Tass Times* is a graphic adventure that offers more than its share of fun and excitement. Oh, and did I mention strangeness? At the start, you take a leap into the future in one of Gramp's inventions-a leap into a very bizarre world. How about guitar picks for currency?

The user interface, which allows mouse control over most of the affair,

DUNGEON MASTER

This long awaited adventure game is finally here. I have only seen a pre-released promotional copy of the game. If that is any indication of the quality of the program, it is bound to be superb. It is a full coloured, three dimensional game with impressive graphics. But I will reserve my judgement until next month, at which time I will attempt to review it.

John Russow

a&b sound

ENRIQUE MERKT (MANAGER)
FRANK VAN NOORDT
WARREN HUXLEY

A & B SOUND HAS THE BIGGEST SELECTION OF ST SOFTWARE, HARDWARE, PERIPHERIALS, ACCESSORIES AND MAGAZINES.

PH. (604) 382-DISK

Tesseract
Computer Systems & Software

LON & ANN TAYLOR
City Centre Plaze, 105 - 1483 Douglas Street
Victoria, B.C. Canada V8W 3K4

WE HAVE A GOOD SELECTION OF SOFTWARE AND MAGAZINES FOR THE ST!

HORIZON

LOW COST
ST SOFTWARE/HARDWARE

HUGE SELECTION

New Catalogs now available, Phone or write. . .

HORIZON TECHNOLOGIES INC.
2810 Shakespeare St. Victoria, B.C. Canada V8R 4G9

(604) 592-0487

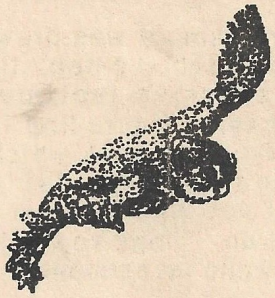
HINTS & NEWS SHORTS

SPECTRUM 512

Although *Spectrum 512* is a great program, it has at least one major problem. The manual states that if you want a printout of your work, all you have to do is convert it to the *Degas* format using the conversion program on the program disk. The conversion program appears to do a conversion of your *Spectrum* file to a *Degas* file, but when you try to load the file in to *Degas, Degas* comes back to you with a message that states that the file you are loading is not a *Degas* file.

If you work a lot with *Degas* you probably know that all the files are exactly 32034 bytes long or 32K. The files that *Spectrum* converts are of different lengths. So, you are unable to print your *Spectrum* file. If anyone has an idea of what to do, please let me know. One of our ST users is in dire need of some help.

Why don't you call *Antic* (The Software supplier) and ask them, you say? Well, I did and what a run around I got. In their warranty they state that; "a limit of 5 minutes of free service is permitted per call.....Our customer Serviceline is.....". They go on to say that "if there is anything we can do to improve our service and products, we'd like to hear from you today". I called first time, Thursday in the afternoon, directly, and the switchboard operator told me that I had to call in the morning as ther e was nobody in the Customer Service department in the afternoon. Next morning I called again only to be told that there was noone in the Customer Service department until Monday. On Monday I thought I would take advantage of their free service call. So, I called collect, only to be told that they don't except collect calls. I then called directly, only to be told that there was noone in the Customer Service department until Wednesday. Give it up! Well done *Antic.*

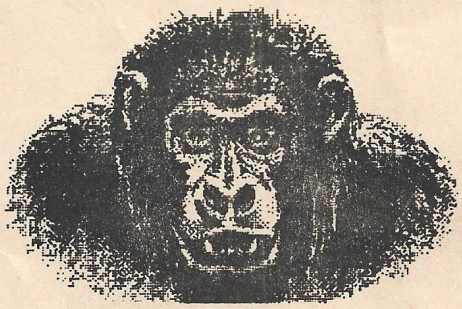


Magic

Not much to tell you about *Magic* this month for a change, except that two more programs can be added to the already extensive list of software that works on the ST.

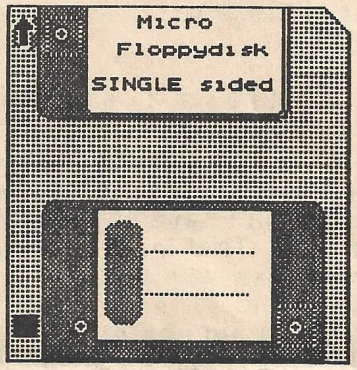
The first one is called *Maccountant* and is a powerful and intuitive accountant package, which certainly can be used in small to medium sized businesses.

The second one is *OverVUE,* a relational database. In many ways *OverVUE* resembles a spreadsheet more than a filing program. For one thing, you normally enter data on a spreadsheet-like grid. For another, the program packs impressive power for working on subsets of your data, and for doing calculations on the data. Finally, like a spreadsheet, *OverVUE* holds your whole file in memory while you're working on it (this limits the document size to some extent, but also allows searches and sorts to happen with blinding speed). On the negative side, you can't choose different fonts:evrything is in Monaco.



IBM

The reason that you don't see much about IBM software is that not many people seem to be interested. If you like to know anything about the MS DOS environment, or about IBM programs, please let me know.



Screen Editors

If one of your disks all of a sudden go berserk, or if you can't retrieve a file. You still may be able to recover all or most of what you have lost. What you need is a Screen Editor. There are two commercial ones as far as I know, and several in the public domain. The best one to my knowledge is Hippo Disk Utilities available from Hippopotamus Software Inc. in California (408) 395-3190. It requires a bit of programming knowledge to use these editors, so you might want to have somebody with some programming knowledge to help you.

All the information you need you will find in the directory from sector 11 to 15 on your disk. First you look for the file name. Following the name of the file you will find six zeroes, followed by two bytes of date stamp, followed by two bytes of time stamp. Then you come to two bytes worth of the location of the file. You go to that location after having converted the HEX numbers to decimals. Once there you bracket the file and save it to another disk.

Unfortunately, I don't think that any of the public domain screen editors allows you to do that.

SYLVIA"S CORNER

Last month I said I would let you know all about my ARTablet.

I digitized the above picture of myself using it. (I thought I'd better tell you what the picture is in case it doesn't come out when it's printed with the laser printer.)

I'm afraid I am very disappointed that the ARTablet won't work with Spectrum 512. I also tried to use it with the Magic Sac and didn't have any luck with that either. That means that you can only draw with DEGAS using the ARTablet. Please don't get me wrong, I am one of DEGAS's biggest fans, I had just hoped to be able to use it with more programs. I haven't had time to try many others yet but was pleasantly surprised to find it works with Publishing Partner just fine. It sure is easier to draw holding a pen instead of drawing with a mouse. I like the feel of it and it does everything the company EI/O said it would do. It won't make you an artist - you must still be able to design and create but it certainly does make it easier. Writing is certainly much clearer. (Signing your name etc.)

Sylvia M. Hanna

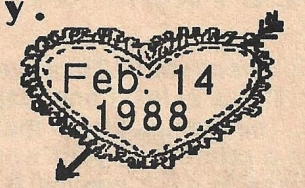
The above sample was drawn using the ARTablet's pen. It is a very expensive tool, over $600 Canadian (including the optional 4-button puck which I purchased for CAD design work.) If you like to draw as much as I do, I think you'll find it a worthwhile investment.

For a real good review on the ARTablet, read the latest issue, January/February 1988, of the Atari Explorer magazine which has a two page write-up which is very informative and was the cause of my purchasing it. I drew the valentine's heart using the ARTablet just for an example.

The drawing tools you have to work with in Publishing Partner are very limited. I hope they are better in the eagerly awaited Professional Publishing Partner which will be available soon.

FOR SALE:
3-D Wanderer ST. Like new, complete with 2 pairs of 3-D glasses - only $15.00. Please call me at 592-5091, in the evening if you are interested in this good deal!

Hope you have a Happy Valentine's day.



CONTRIBUTORS

Writing & Editing:
JOHN RUSSOW

• • •

Design & Layout:
SYLVIA HANNA
& JOHN RUSSOW

• • •

ROBERT FRASER
(President) 478-3075
BOB FURBER
(Librarian) 592-5714
JOHN RUSSOW
(Treasurer & Editor)
598-2740

NEXT MEETING

Will be held on Tuesday,
March 1st.
It will be at the **Saanich** Library from 7:00 pm to 9:00 pm.

V.I.S.T.A.
920 Rowils Cres.,
Victoria, B.C.
V9B 2M7